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The Duty and Advantages of frequently
Receiving the Holy Sacrament.

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S E R M O N
Preach'd before the
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St. James's Chappel,
On GOOD-FRIDAY, March 26. 1703.

By the Most Reverend Father in God,
J O H N ^{K. Sharp} Lord Archbishop of Y O R K.
Publish'd by Her Majesty's Especial Command.

L O N D O N:
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's-Head* in
St. Paul's Church-Yard: And *William Rogers*, at the
Sun against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleetstreet. 1703.

D: H O X V I & X X X I V

The Duty and Advantage of Frequent
Reading the Holy Scriptures

A
SERMON

QUEEN

At
St. James's Chapel,

On Good-Friday, March 26. 1703

By the Most Reverend Father in God,
J. O. H. N. Lord Archbishop of York &c.
Published by Her Majesty's Clerical Command.

LONDON:
Printed for Wm. Stansfeld, at the Bishop's Head in
St. Paul's Church-Yard: And William Rogers, at the
Sign against St. Dunstons Church in Fleet-street. 1703.

LUKE XXII. 19.

---This do in remembrance of me.

I Hope it will not be thought unseasonable, if on *this Day*, on which our Saviour *suffered*, I entertain you with a Discourse of that *Holy Sacrament*, which was on purpose instituted by him, for the *Commemoration* of those his *Sufferings*. For as this Argument will lead me to Treat of most of those Things which are the proper Subjects of our Meditations at this Time; so considering that all of us who are *Religiously* disposed, are preparing our selves to partake of that *Holy Feast* on *Easter-Day*; a Sermon upon that *Mystery* may be of some Use to us in that respect: Especially it being an Argument which is not often Treated of in this Place.

Three Things I beg leave to lay before you relating to this Sacrament.

First, The *Obligation* that lies upon all Christians to Communicate in it, and to Communicate frequently.

Secondly, The *Benefits* and *Advantages* we shall receive by so practising.

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Thirdly,

Thirdly, The little or no Weight that there is in the common Pretences, which usually keep People from this frequent Communicating.

I begin with the *First Thing*; viz. The *Obligation* that lies upon all Christians to receive the Sacrament, and to receive it frequently. And here I take my Rise from our Saviour's Words that I have now read to you, *Do this* (saith he) *in remembrance of me*. These are the Words by which he did *Institute* or appoint for ever this Sacred *Mystery* of the *Communion*. Here he gives a *Commandment* to his *Disciples*, that they should *do this in remembrance of him*. But what is it they must do? Why, the Words going before do inform us. They must do that which Christ now did, that is, they must *take Bread*, and *bless it*, and *break it*, and *give it*: This they must do *in remembrance of Christ*. Now if it was the Duty of the *Apostles*, and those that succeeded them in the Ministry of the Church, thus to *take Bread*, and *bless it*, and *break it*, and *give it*; then certainly it must be the Duty of all Christians committed to their Care, to *receive*, and *eat the Bread* so taken, and *blessed*, and *broken*, and *given*, *in remembrance of Christ*. And the same likewise as to the *Cup*, which our Saviour appointed to go along with it.

You see then in the *First* place, That the receiving of the Sacrament is a necessary and a perpetual

tual Duty, incumbent upon all Christians. For it is expressly commanded by our Saviour, and the Reason of the Command doth extend to all Persons, and to all Ages of the World. *Do this*, says he, *in remembrance of me.* And to the same Purpose St. Paul (1 Cor. XI. 26.) *As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's Death till he come.* If now it be a perpetual Duty to Remember Christ; if it be a perpetual Duty to shew forth his Death till he comes; Then it must of necessity be a Duty, to make use of those Symbols and Ceremonies that he hath appointed to Remember him, and to shew forth his Death by; and it must be a Duty thus to do to the *World's end*, because Christ is not to come till then. And further; If it be a Duty to Remember Christ, and to shew forth his Death frequently; and the more frequently we do it, the better Christians we are, (as is on all hands acknowledged;) Then in the same degree and proportion ought we to think our selves obliged to a frequent Participation of this Sacrament.

But Secondly, That we should thus join in giving and receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Remembrance of Christ, is not only his express Command; but such a Command, that if we consider the Time in which it was given, and the Circumstances likewise with which he gave it, we cannot but be sensible that we ought to have a most especial

especial particular Regard to it. This was in a manner the Last Command he gave to his Disciples. He was now a going to part from them, and to do the greatest Kindness for Mankind that ever was done. He was a going to lay down his Life, as an *Offering* for the Sins of Men, and by his Death to procure everlasting Salvation for them; and now at parting he desires this particular Thing of them, which he would have observed by them, and all that came after them; namely, That in *Memory* of him they would *bless Bread and Wine*, and eat and drink them for his sake. Ought not these Circumstances to be a strange Endearment of this *Institution*, to all that profess themselves his Disciples? Will not every Good-natur'd Ingenuous Man that considers these Things, be naturally apt to put a more than ordinary Value upon those dear *Pledges* that our Dying Saviour hath thus bequeathed to us? Or is it possible that any one can so much as pretend to love our Lord *Jesus*, and yet be so insensible of his last Commands, and the Circumstances wherewith they were given, as to live in a constant and wilful Neglect of them?

But this is not all that doth recommend this Duty to us. There is this farther Thing in the Thing place to be considered: This is in a manner the peculiar Command of our Saviour, the only proper Act of *Christian Worship* that he hath appointed. T

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assemble together in Publick for the Service of God ; for the asking Pardon for our Sins ; for the begging Mercies and Favours from him ; for the returning our Thanks, and Praises, and Acknowledgments for Benefits received ; and also for the receiving Instructions and Admonitions about our Moral Conversation, and the Truths and Duties of our Religion ; is common to all the Religions in the World. Both *Jews* and *Turks* do this as well as *Christians*. But to join together in *Commemorating the Death of Christ*, is the peculiar Duty that is incumbent on us, as we profess to be the Followers of *Jesus*. It is the *distinguishing* Badge of our Profession. It is an Act of Worship that our Lord hath ordained, for our Evidencing to all the World that we are *His* Disciples, and that we own *Him* to be our Lord and Master. And therefore, tho' in our other Offices of Devotion, we may be truly said to worship God, and to give Honour to our Saviour ; yet we cannot be said so properly to worship as *Christians*, except we join in those Sacred *Mysteries* that Christ has made peculiar to his own Religion. And upon this account it was, that the Primitive Christians looked upon this Service of the *Communion* as so necessary, so essential a part of the *Christian Worship*, that they never held their Publick Assemblies without it ; and none of the Faithful in those Days, that came to *Prayers*, went away

till they had been Partakers of the Sacrament. This Consideration surely ought to lay a mighty Obligation upon all that call themselves by the Name of Christ, and would be thought his daily Worshippers, to omit no Opportunity that is offered them, of doing Homage to their Saviour in this way.

But *Fourthly* and lastly, To give you a farther Argument of our Obligation to the frequent Practise of this Duty, let me a little more particularly insist on the End for which this Sacrament was Instituted, as it is here assigned by our Saviour. *Do this, says he, in Remembrance of me.* The great Business of this Sacred Mystery is to Commemorate the Death of our Lord, and the Benefits we receive thereby, and to express our Thankfulness to God and him for them. Now can any Man profess himself a Christian, and yet not think himself obliged to take every Occasion of doing this? Nay, and to be glad when such an Occasion is offered? Doth all the great Love of our Saviour in laying down his Life, and thereby purchasing Eternal Happiness for us, not deserve so much as a Remembrance? Are there no Thanks due to him, for the inexpressible Humiliation of himself, to take our Flesh upon him? and in that Flesh to undergo God knows how many Sorrows and Afflictions for our sakes; and at last for our sakes to expose him-
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self to an Ignominious Tormenting Crucifixion; that *through his Stripes we might be healed*; through his *Death we might obtain Life*? What, I say, is not all this worthy of some *Remembrance*? Some *Thanks*? Yes certainly, every one among us, that believes Christ to have done and suffered all this for us, must needs think we ought to Remember this great Kindness as long as we live, and to give him continual Thanks for it. But yet let me tell you, the only *Solemn Way* that he hath appointed for our Commemoration of these his Benefits, and expressing our Thankfulness for them, is this of receiving the Sacrament. *Do this in Remembrance of me.* This is the great Purpose and Intent of it. This is the Way in which Christ will be *Remembered* and *Thanked* for his Favours. And sure it is very idle to think of any other Methods than what he himself hath appointed; and they must be intolerably ungrateful, that will not do thus much for him. If our Saviour for the Commemoration of his Benefits, and the shewing our Thankfulness for them, had commanded us some extremely severe thing; (as among several of the Pagan Nations their *Commemorative Mysteries* in Honour of their Deities, were cruel and severe enough;) we might then indeed have had some colourable Excuse for our seldom or unfrequent Expressions of our Obedience to his Commands. But now when he re-

quires no more of us, than to come to his *Table*, and there to *eat* and *drink* in *Remembrance* of him, and in token of our *Thankfulness* to him; they must either be no *Believers*, or have very little *Sense* of his *Kindness*, that can easily absent themselves, and deny him such *Expressions* of their *Gratitude*.

I must confess to you these Things seem to me to carry so much *Weight* and *Force* in them, that I cannot but wonder how it comes to pass that our *Communion*s are generally so little frequented; nay, that they are not as full as our *Assemblies* for *Prayers* or *Sermons*: The *Duty* being so very necessary, and the *Performance* of it so little troublesome, and withal the *Benefits* that accrue to us from the due *Performance* of it, being so many and so great. Of which I now come to speak; that being the *Second Head* I am to discourse of.

In the *Second Place*, As for the *Benefits* and *Advantages* which we shall reap by a *Conscientious Discharge* of our *Duty* in this matter, they are truly *Great*, I may say *Unvaluable*. Indeed in all the *Instances* wherein God has laid his *Commands* upon us, we may, from the *Obedience* we yield to them, certainly promise to our selves great *Blessings* and *Rewards*; for all God's *Commandments* are for our good, and not for his. But this holds
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in none more than in this particular Instance we are now speaking of. *Three Things* I shall briefly represent to you upon this Head. And they are of so great Moment, that whoever considers them, cannot but be convinced that it is extremely to his own Loss and Prejudice, that he doth at any time neglect the Opportunities that are afforded him of approaching to the Lord's Table.

First of all, The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the great and solemn Means that Christ has appointed in his Church to all Christians, for the obtaining the Pardon and Forgiveness of their Sins committed since their Baptism. As the Sacrament of Baptism was Instituted by Christ, for the entering Men into Covenant with God; by the Means whereof, all the Sins they were guilty of before they became Christians were forgiven: So this other Sacrament of his Supper was Instituted for the Renewing that Covenant with God; by the Means whereof, all their Sins since their Baptism are remitted to them, and a Conveyance likewise made of all the other Benefits of Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross.

This is the Doctrine of the Catholick Church in this Matter of the Two Sacraments. And it will receive some Light from the Two great Sacraments among the Jews, Circumcision and Sacrifices, which were eminent Types and Figures of our Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

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Among the *Jews*, the Way that God appointed for the entering Persons into Covenant with him, was *Circumcision*: And whoever was Circumcised, was entitled thereby to all the Benefits and Advantages that were promised and made over by that Covenant. And the same Thing we say, as to all those that are entered into the New Covenant of Jesus Christ by *Baptism*. Well now, but if an *Israelite* thus entered into Covenant with God, happen'd afterwards to transgress any Law of God; before he could obtain Forgiveness, and be restored to God's Favour, he must offer such *Sacrifices* as the Law had appointed in that Case: And by offering these *Sacrifices* he renewed his Covenant with God, and was admitted to that State which by his Sin he had forfeited. And the very way of offering up these *Sacrifices* did very lively represent this. For when a Man brought any of this kind of *Sacrifices*; after that *Sacrifice* had been offered to God, Part of it was burnt upon the Altar, which was God's Portion; and another Part of it was given back to the Man that brought it, for him to Feast upon with his Family. By which was signified, That the Man thus eating of God's Meat, and feeding as it were at God's Table, was restored to his Grace and Favour, and in Covenant with him: *Eating and drinking together*, being the Ceremony used among all Nations, for the expres-

expressing Friendship and Reconciliation, and for the Ratifying Leagues and Covenants.

Now to the same Use and Purpose (say we) serves our *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, or as it was called by the Ancients, the *Christian Sacrifice*. Not that we pretend in our Communions to Offer up the *Real Body and Blood* of Christ in Sacrifice to God, as the Papists do: For that (as the Apostle tells us) was once done by himself upon the Cross, and by *that one Offering he hath for ever* Heb. X. perfected all them that are sanctified; so that there is ¹⁴ no need of any such Offering any more: But we Commemorate that Sacrifice which Christ has on this Day made for us; and we thank God for it; and we heartily beseech him that he would accept of it on our behalf, and that it may make *Atonement* for all our Sins: And we likewise feed upon it (as the Jews did upon their Sacrifices); that is to say, by eating of that *Bread* which he made to be his *Body*, and drinking of that *Cup* which he made to be his *Blood*. Now in doing of this, we may be truly said both to Offer up a Sacrifice to God; and likewise to keep a *Feast* upon this Sacrifice. We offer up, by Commemoration and Thanksgiving, and hearty Prayer, that Sacrifice that was once offered by Jesus Christ at *Jerusalem* near Seventeen Hundred Years ago, for the Salvation of all Mankind. And we partake both of the *Body and Blood* of that

that his Sacrifice, by partaking of the *Bread* and *Wine* that he has Consecrated not only to be the *Symbols* and *Signs* of them, but to Convey the Real Benefits of his *Passion* and *Sacrifice* to all Believers. So that we may be truly said to feed at God's *Table*, whenever we receive the *Sacrament*: And if we come worthily disposed, to have all our past Sins blotted out, and to be received into his *Grace*, and *Favour*, and *Friendship*: Which is all that I mean by Renewing our Covenant with him.

But that I may not seem to ground so Important a Doctrine as this is, merely upon the *Types* and *Figures* of the Old Testament, I ought to tell you, That all I have said, is sufficiently clear both from our Saviour's own Words in the Institution of this Sacrament, and likewise from St. Paul. Our Saviour calls the Cup of the Sacrament, *The New Covenant in his Blood*. Or as it is in another Evangelist, *The Blood of the New Covenant, which was shed for many for the Remission of Sins*. St. Paul likewise tells us, That the Cup of Blessing which we bless, and the Bread which we break, is the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ: The Sense of which is plainly this, That these Sacred Signs make them that use them, to have Communion with Christ Crucified. The Partaking of the *Bread* and of the *Cup*, is the Means that God hath

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hath appointed for our Partaking of the Benefits of Christ's Body that was Broken, and of his Blood that was Shed for us, that is to say, the Forgiveness of our Sins, and all the other Fruits and Advantages of his Passion.

Is not this now a Consideration that should strongly oblige all Christians to a frequent Participation of this Sacrament? Can any thing more recommend this Ordinance to us, than the Thoughts that it cancels all the Scores between God and us, provided we come prepared as we ought to be? That it puts us into a State of his Favour, and enters us into so strict a League of Friendship with him, as not all the Powers of Earth and Hell can dissolve, unless we our selves be Traitors to our selves.

These are great things, but these are not all. For in the *Second* place, another Advantage we have by the Sacrament is, *That it is in it self an excellent Instrument for the making Men grow in Virtue and Goodness.*

That serious Reflection upon a Man's own Ways; that careful Examination and Enquiry into the State of his own Soul; those Expressions of Sorrow and Repentance for what he finds amiss in himself; and the earnest Prayers he makes to God for his Grace, together with the hearty Resolutions he enters into, of a better Obedience for the future; All which

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things are necessary Preparations for the Worthy Partaking of this Solemn Mystery, especially in one that comes but seldom to it, (for indeed the Case is otherwise as to those that so Live as to be always Prepared for it, and accordingly do take all Occasions of Receiving it): I say these things are the likeliest means in the World not only to keep up in a Man; the Sense of Virtue and Piety towards God, but also to restore it when through Carelessness it is in a manner quite lost; or if it be not lost or decayed, to increase and advance it, and to make it much clearer and brighter than ever it was.

O how ought this Consideration to prevail with all Persons that make a Conscience of Religion, and endeavour to serve God as well as they can, and mean to persevere in that Course of Life; to take every Occasion that is offered to partake of this Divine Ordinance. Such is the Nature of our Souls while they are pent up in these Earthly Tabernacles, and surrounded with sensible Objects, that the Spiritual Impressions that are stampe upon them, must be continually renewed, or else in a little time they will be quite defaced and lost. The most Ardent Love to God and Virtue will by degrees flag and grow cold, unless it be by some means or other frequently Excited. *Wisely* therefore,

fore, and *Admirably* for our Advantage, hath our Lord Jesus contrived this Means of the *Holy Sacrament*, for the preventing or remedying these Inconveniencies. By obliging us to a frequent Communion in this Divine Office, he hath put us upon the necessity of so often thinking and meditating on Spiritual Matters, of impressing upon our Souls all those Arguments that at first prevailed with us to enter upon a Course of Virtue, and of reinforcing all our Vows and Resolutions to give up our selves to the Service of God; that it will not be an easie matter to forget our Duty, or to relapse from our good Purposes.

And the Nature of the Mystery it self is such, that nothing in the World can be better contrived for the attaining these ends; that is to say, for the working in us a perfect hatred of all Sin and Wickedness, and raising up our Affections to the most Passionate Love of our Saviour. Since there we have in the most sensible manner represented to us, the Infinite Unspeakable Kindness that the Son of God expressed to the Sons of Men, in laying down his Life for them; and the Infinite Malignity that is in Sin, which was so odious to the Pure Eyes of God, that nothing less than the Blood of his own Son could make Expiation for it.

Whoever therefore is now Piously disposed, and intends to go on in that good Way, and to grow better and better, let him as frequently as he can make use of this Means which God hath appointed for these very Ends. This is the best way to make the *Grain of Mustard-seed* sown in our Hearts to become a great *Tree*. This is the surest Method, not only to keep the *smoking Flax* from being quenched, but to make it *blaze out in flames*.

Which we shall be farther convinced of, if we consider in the *Third* place, another Advantage which we reap by this Sacrament; and that is this, That it doth not only minister to the promoting piety and Holiness, by making us more serious, and putting us more upon the Exercise of Devotion; but also in this respect, That it is a means whereby *more Grace and strength is derived to us from the Holy Spirit of Christ*.

We have already said, that our Lord ordained this Sacrament as the general Instrument whereby he would actually apply to Believers all the Benefits of his Passion. Now the Benefits that Christ purchased for us by his Death, were not only the *Pardon* of our Sins, of which we have spoken before, but also the *Grace and Assistance* of his *Holy Spirit*, in order to our performing those Conditions which he hath required of us. Now as the partaking
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of this Sacrament is the standing ordinary Means of receiving the former Benefit, namely, the *Pardon* of our Sins : So is it also of receiving the latter, that is, the *strength*, and *support*, and *influences* of the *Holy Spirit*. By partaking of these Holy Mysteries as we should do, we are made *one with Christ*, and *Christ with us*, as our Church expresses it ; we become *living Branches* of the *true Vine*, and consequently derive all that vital Juice and Sap from Christ our *Root*, that is needful for our bringing forth *good Fruit*. This is the proper Method to Allure down the *Divine Spirit* of *Jesus* to come and dwell with us ; to oblige him to take up his Habitation in our *Hearts*, so that we shall be truly the *Temples* of the *Living God*.

O what an Inducement ought this to be to us to make our selves constant Guests at this *Holy Feast* ! Since we may there get Strength against all our Infirmities, Physick for all our Diseases, Support against all the Evils that oppress us. Are there any of us that are hard put to it, either through the prevailing Infirmities of our Natures, or those that our evil Customs have brought upon us ? Are there any of us that want Strength or Courage to grapple with our Spiritual Enemies, or to resist those Temptations that daily make Assaults upon us in our way of Living ? Why here we may have
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Remedy. By coming frequently, and conscientiously, and devoutly to this Feast of God, we may gain such *Refreshment*, such *Support*, such *Strength* and *Power*, as will enable us to go through our Work chearfully and successfully; such *Succours* as will not fail, if we faithfully make use of them, to Vanquish all our Spiritual Adversaries; and Lastly, such *Comfort* and *Peace* of Mind as will make our Lives tolerably easie under all the Difficulties and Troubles and Calamities of this Miserable World.

And now these Considerations, one would think, should sufficiently Recommend the frequent Practice of this piece of Religion to all of us, that have either any Love to God, or Regard to their own Happiness. But notwithstanding all this, there are some such fatal *Prejudices* that Men have too often taken up concerning this Sacrament, that all Discourses of this Nature are generally ineffectual. Some of these therefore I shall endeavour in the *Third* and last Place to remove out of the way; and so conclude.

The *Prejudices* and *Misapprehensions* that Men lie under as to this Business; - and which usually fright them from coming to the Sacrament, are very many; but the greatest and most common of them, are these *Two* following. The general Sense that Men have

have of their own *Unfitness* to Receive it; and the infinite *Danger* they run, if they should happen to Receive *Unworthily*. Upon these *Two* Accounts it is, that many that are otherwise well disposed Persons, dare not come to the Lord's Table. They are so frighted with the Apprehension of their own Guilt, and their Unworthiness to partake of so Solemn a *Mystery*; and likewise with the Terrible Punishment that is threatned to all those that Receive *Unworthily*; that they think it much better wholly to absent themselves from the Sacrament, than run the hazard they must do, by taking it in the Circumstances they are. These *Two* things I shall at this time briefly speak to.

And *First*, It is commonly urged by the Generality of Men as an Excuse for Absenting themselves from the Sacrament, That they are no way qualified for it. They are not in a Condition of coming to the Lord's Table, by reason of the Remissness and Carelessness of their Lives, and their falling so many Degrees short of that Holiness the Gospel of Christ requires of them.

But to this, let me say in the *First* place, Whose Fault is this? Why do we not all live better? Who hinders us from being so good as we ought to be? Either it is in our Power to live so, as may put us into a condition of worthily performing this Instance
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of our Duty to our Lord, or it is not in our Power. If it be in our Power, then we cannot in the least plead this for an Excuse of our not doing it: If it be not in our Power, then we can contract no new Guilt by coming to Receive, tho' we should prove to Receive Unworthily, provided we have done the best we can. But in God's Name, how dare we live at such a rate, that we are incapable of joyn- ing in the Principal Part of the Christian Worship? Nothing in the World can *unqualify* us for that, but what at the same time doth render us *unqualified* for the Kingdom of Heaven. And dare we live so, that if God should this day call us out of the World, we should think our selves in a state of Damnation?

But *Secondly*, Tho' we do not live so well as we desire; tho' our Lives be not so Holy, and so Pure, and so Heavenly, as may become the Partakers of so Divine a Mystery as that of the Sacrament is; yet let us not for this wholly absent our selves from it. Nay, rather let us come the oftner to it; for that is the Means to make us better. It is the most effectual Course we can take to promote Virtue and Piety in our selves. Whereas if we never come at all, we take the direct way to be always as bad as we are, or rather to grow worse and worse.

Would any one advise a sensual careless Man, by no means to take a *Bible* into his hands, or to
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come to *Prayers*, or to hear *Sermons*; because he is very unfit for, and unworthy of such Exercises? No surely, he will rather propose the Use of these things to such a Person, as a singular Means to gain him to Virtue and Sobriety. The very same thing we may say of the Use of the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. It may, and often doth, prove a happy Expedient, through the Mercy of God, to make those *Good* that were not so before.

I speak not this to encourage any Vicious, Evil Liver to approach to this Ordinance, if he thinks of continuing in his Sins. No, very unfit it is that That Holy Bread should be given to such *unclean Creatures*. But this is that I would say, Let none upon account of their fore-past Lives, be discouraged from doing their Duty to God in this Ordinance. On the contrary, if they can be truly sorry for their Sins, and heartily resolve with the grace of God to forsake them; Let them come with cheerfulness to the *Lord's Table*, not doubting but God will kindly receive them, and will give them such *Grace and Strength*, that if they will make use of it, they shall not fail of being true Converts to Holiness and Piety.

But it is said in the *Second Place*, That the Sin of *unworthy Receiving* is so great, and the *Punishment* threatened to it so grievous, that it seems safer

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not to Receive at all, than to run such a desperate Hazard. This is another Consideration that frights many from the Sacrament; tho' otherwise well-disposed Persons. That Passage of *St. Paul* is always running in their Minds, (*1 Cor. XI. 29.*) *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself.* This is the Text that frights them. But now as to this, I pray let it be considered:

In the *First Place*, Those among us that are so fearful of coming to the Sacrament, are in no danger at all of *Receiving unworthily*, in the sense that *St. Paul* useth this Term. For the unworthy Receiving that he so severely censures in the *Corinthians*, was their approaching to the Lord's Table with so little a Sense of what they were about, that as he here expresseth it, *they did not discern the Lord's Body.* That is to say, they made no distinction between the *Bread of the Sacrament*, and *Common Food.* Things were then at that pass among the *Corinthians*, that when they met together to Receive the Sacrament, (which in those days was usually ushered in by a Common Feast of Rich and Poor together) they used the Church more like an *Eating or Tipling-House* than the *House of God.* This you may see in the 20th Verse of that Chapter: *When (saith he) ye come together into one place, this*

is not to Eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, every one takes before other his own Supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken. What, have ye not Houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church of God? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. Thus far St. Paul in that Place. Now sure such an Unworthy, Irreverent, Profane Carriage as this, at the Receiving the Holy Sacrament, might justly deserve that severe Censure that he there passeth upon it: *He that eateth and drinketh thus unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself, because he discerneth not the Lord's Body.* But I hope there is none of those among us that are so very scrupulous about coming to the Sacrament, can be in any danger of Profaning it after this manner.

But Secondly, The Damnation which St Paul here denounceth, is not perhaps so frightful as is commonly apprehended. For all that he saith, if the Original be consulted, will appear to be no more than this; *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Judgment to himself;* meaning hereby, that he who doth thus Affront our Lord's Institution, by making no distinction between the Bread of the Sacrament and Common Food, doth by this his Profaneness draw down severe Judgments from God upon his own Head. For, for this cause

(saith he in the next words) *many are weak and sickly among you, and many are fallen asleep.* But here is not a word of *everlasting Damnation*; much less of any Man's being concluded in that State, by *Receiving Unworthily*. Unless one will say, that all those who are visited by God's *Judgments* in this World, shall be *Damned* in the next; which is so far from being true, that St. Paul in this very place affirms the contrary; namely, in verse 32. where he tells us, that *when we are thus Judged (in this World) we are Chastened of the Lord, that we should not be Condemned with the World.*

But *Thirdly*, Admitting St. Paul in these words to mean *Damnation* in our usual Sense; yet still the utmost they can come to, will be no more than this; That whosoever *eateth and drinketh thus unworthily*, as the *Corinthians* did, is guilty of a *Damnable Sin*. But now there are a great many other Cases, besides this of the *Sacrament*, in which a Man is guilty of a damnable Sin, if he do not perform his Duty as he ought to do. He that *Prays or Hears Unworthily*, or in any Instance performs the Worship of God, or professeth the Christian Religion *Unworthily*: I say, such a Man, according to the Protestant *Doctrine*, may be said to do these things to his own *Damnation*, upon the same Account that he is said to *eat and drink his own Damnation* that *Communi-*
cates

cates Unworthily in the *Sacrament*; tho' perhaps, not in so high a Degree. That is to say, Such a Man is guilty of a Sin that is in its own Nature *Damnable*; and may prove so to him, unless either by a *particular* or *general* Repentance he obtains God's Pardon for it. But yet for all this; there is no Man will for these Reasons think it advisable to leave off the Practice of these Duties. But the only Consequence he will draw from hence is, that he is so much the more concerned to take care that he perform them as he ought to do.

But *Fourthly* and lastly, to conclude. Let the Sin of coming to the *Sacrament unworthily* be as great and as *Damnable* as we can reasonably suppose it; yet this is that we contend for; The Sin of totally withdrawing from it, is *greater* and more *Damnable*. So that if he who partakes of it *unworthily* doth eat and drink *Damnation* to himself; he that Partakes not at all, is so far from mending the Matter, that he doth increase that *Damnation*. The Truth of this Assertion depends upon that known Rule of *Casuistical* Divinity, That it is a greater Sin to omit a known Duty altogether, than to perform that Duty as well as we can, tho' with much Unworthiness.

But I dare hold you no longer upon this Argument; I would only say this, and I have done.
Tho'

Tho' I am far from encouraging any to approach the Lord's Table without due Qualifications; or from extenuating any Man's Sin that comes *unworthily*, (*unworthily* I mean in the Scripture Sense of the Word, and not as it is understood by some People among us:) Yet this I say, That if Men did seriously consider what a Sin it is to live without the Sacrament; it being an apparent Neglect, and looking like a Contempt of our Saviour's Institution, and a Renouncing the Worship of God, and the Communion of the Church, in the great Instance of Christian Worship and Christian Communion: And withal, what terrible Consequences they bring upon themselves thereby, even the depriving themselves of the Chief of those ordinary Means which our Lord hath appointed for the obtaining Remission of Sins, and the Grace and Influences of the Holy Spirit: I say, if Men did seriously consider these Things, they would not look upon it as so slight a Matter voluntarily to Excommunicate themselves from the Society of the Faithful, as to the Partaking in this Great Duty and Privilege of Christians; but what Apprehensions soever they had, of the Sin and Danger of Receiving *unworthily*, they would for all that, think it more Sinful and more Dangerous not to Receive at all.

I pray

I pray God give us all Grace, seriously to consider these Things, and so enlighten our Minds, and dispose our Wills by his Holy Spirit, that laying aside all Prejudices, and Sloth, and Carnal Affections, we may sincerely apply our selves to serve God constantly and diligently, in this and all the other Instances that he hath commanded us; to the Glory of his Blessed Name, and to our own great Comfort, and Increase in Piety and Virtue. *This, God of his Infinite Mercy grant, &c.*

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